

Coins

A weighty issue strikes historic gold

By Roger Boye

THE REPUBLIC OF Panama has issued what is believed to be the largest and heaviest gold coin in circulation in the world.

The coin has a face value of 500 balboas [equivalent to 500 United States dollars], the highest denomination coin in Panama's history. It is 1¾ inches in diameter, and weighs 41.7 grams. The gold is 900/1000 fine.

Obverse side shows Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa, and the reverse has the national coat of arms of Panama. The coin is being issued on the 500th anniversary of Balboa's birth.

The coin has been minted for Panama by the

Franklin Mint. Uncirculated specimens may be ordered for \$503 by writing the Franklin Mint, Franklin Center, Pa. 19091.

THE U.S. MINT currently is accepting orders for 1976 proof sets. A set, which contains six coins [a dollar through a one-cent piece], costs \$7. Five sets is the limit per order.

Orders should be sent to Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San Francisco, Cal. 94175. The mint will accept orders until its production limit is reached.

The dollar, half-dollar, and quarter coins in these proof sets will have the Bicentennial reverse design and will be struck on the copper-nickel clad blanks.

ALL THREE OF the coins with the Bicentennial reverse designs are now in circulation, and some Chicago-area collectors have reported obtaining them at local banks.

And some collectors have reported finding Bicentennial coins with minor production errors. For example, a Highland Park collector says he received a Bicentennial half-dollar with weak or missing letters in the words "Independence Hall." Such errors are caused by sloppy work at the mint.

Genuine coin errors usually add a small value to the coin. The value depends on such factors as whether the error is a common one and the prominence of the error.